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## **SOFTWARE PIRATE SENTENCED TO 30 MONTHS IN PRISON**

### ***Illinois Man Is 12th Conviction from Operation SafeHaven***

WASHINGTON – An Illinois man was sentenced to 30 months in prison for participating in an organized online software distribution conspiracy, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Kevin J. O'Connor for the District of Connecticut announced today.

Eli El, 40, of Blue Island, Ill., was sentenced to 30 months in prison and three years of supervision by Senior U.S. District Judge Ellen Bree Burns in New Haven, Conn.

On May 4, 2007, El pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit criminal copyright infringement for his participation in the distribution of approximately 20,000 copyright works over the Internet through the warez scene – an underground online community of individuals and organized groups who use the Internet to engage in the large-scale, illegal distribution of copyrighted software. In the warez scene, certain participants act as suppliers and obtain access to copyrighted software, video games, DVD movies, and MP3 music files, before those titles are commercially available to the general public. Other participants then use their technical skills to crack digital copyright protections, and others act as couriers by distributing the pirated software to hundreds of file servers on the Internet for others to access, reproduce, and further distribute.

El gained privileged access to a number of warez file servers, also known as FTP sites, where he was authorized to upload pirated software. In return for uploading pirated software files to these warez FTP sites, El obtained authorization to download other pirated software, games, and movies that had been uploaded to those sites by other members of the warez scene. In the case of one particular site known as "The Ether Net," El and his coconspirators distributed or caused the distribution of approximately 20,000 individual copyrighted works over the Internet.

El is the 12th defendant to be convicted in Operation Safehaven, a 15-month investigation led by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the ICE Cybercrime Center. Operation Safehaven culminated in April 2003 with the simultaneous execution of more than 20 search warrants nationwide, resulting in the seizure of thousands of pirated CDs and DVDs, plus dozens of computers and servers, including the largest warez site ever seized in the United States at that time.

This case was investigated by ICE. The case was prosecuted by Trial Attorney Matthew J. Bassiur from the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Edward Chang of the District of Connecticut.

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